

Motivation through personal
values: the Estonian Defence
League, the Estonian Defence
Forces and the Danish Home Guard

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Introduction

“Values influence most if not all motivated behaviour.” S. H. Schwartz

When we talk about personal values, we think of what is important to us. Values are defined in scholarly literature as objectives worth striving toward; principles that stem from people’s basic biological and social needs¹. Personal values provide a basis for formation of social groups and motivated behaviour by the groups. Values also have an important role in choosing jobs – employees who have chosen theirs based on their personal values to identify with an organization or contribute to a certain field are already highly motivated when they first enter the organization. Managers and other superiors must be able to harness that inner commitment to achieve objectives. This is especially important for volunteer organizations where personnel are not bound by an ordinary employment contract, whose work is not remunerated and who are free in their decisions in contributing to a field that fits in well with their own personal aspirations and desires.

This analysis is part of a larger study and provides answers to the following questions:

- 1) What values are espoused by people who serve as professional Defence Forces members or contribute as volunteers to the activities of military organizations? Do they prioritize values differently?
- 2) To what extent do personal values align with the organization’s values and mission?
- 3) In what ways can an organization increase employees’ motivation in light of their personal values?

The participants in the study were:

- 1) the Estonian Defence League, a volunteer organization;
- 2) Estonian Defence Forces – active-duty personnel and people under employment contract;
- 3) Danish Hjemmeværnet – the Home Guard, the Estonian Defence League’s sister organization;
- 4) As a control group, people who neither work for the Defence Forces nor belong to the Defence League.

¹ Shalom H. Schwarz, Are there universal aspects in the structure and contents of human values? – Journal of Social Issues, 4, 19–45, 1994

Theoretical model

The analysis is based on the model of value types devised by a social psychologist and scholar of intercultural differences, professor Shalom H. Schwartz. The Schwartz model was chosen because it provides a possibility of comparing an organization's values with people's own individual values, including security-related values important for the military field. The model allows us to measure 57 separate personal value items that in turn can be grouped into ten motivational value types as follows:

- 1) **Universalism**: understanding, tolerance, acceptance, defending all people's well-being and nature (equality, inner harmony, world peace, unity with nature, wisdom, world of beauty, social justice, broadminded, protecting the environment)
- 2) **Benevolence**: preserving and enhancing the welfare of those with whom one is in frequent personal contact (spiritual life, meaning in life, mature love, true friendship, loyal, honest, helpful, forgiving, responsible).
- 3) **Tradition**: commitment to and respect for customs and ideas or religion (respect for traditions, moderate, humble, accepting one's lot in life, devout)
- 4) **Conformity**: settling limits on actions, refraining from deviations and impulsiveness that may upset or harm others or violate societal expectations and standards (politeness, self-discipline, respect for parents and the elderly, obedient)
- 5) **Security**: safety, harmony, and stability of society, of relationships, and of oneself (sense of belonging, social order, national security, reciprocity of favours, family security, physically and mentally healthy, clean)
- 6) **Power**: social status and prestige, dominance/control over other people and resources (social power, wealth, authority, preserving one's public image, social recognition)
- 7) **Achievement**: personal success through demonstrating competence according to social standards (successful, capable, ambitious, influential, intelligent, self-respect)
- 8) **Hedonism**: pleasure or sensual gratification for oneself (pleasure, enjoying life, self-indulgent)
- 9) **Stimulation**: excitement, novelty, and challenge in life (exciting life, varied life, daring)
- 10) **Self-direction**: independent thought and action, creating, exploring (freedom of thought and action, creativity, privacy, independent, choosing one's own goals, curious)

In general, people's preferences regarding values are different, depending on genetic makeup, personal experience, social and cultural factors and changes in the environment. At the same time, some research has confirmed astonishing similarities. The study conducted among 63 nations – including

Estonia and Denmark – in 2001 among upper secondary school graduates and university students showed that the hierarchical rankings of values types proved similar: benevolence, self-direction and universalism received the most points; power, stimulation and tradition received the fewest points; with conformity, achievement and hedonism mostly falling somewhere in between.

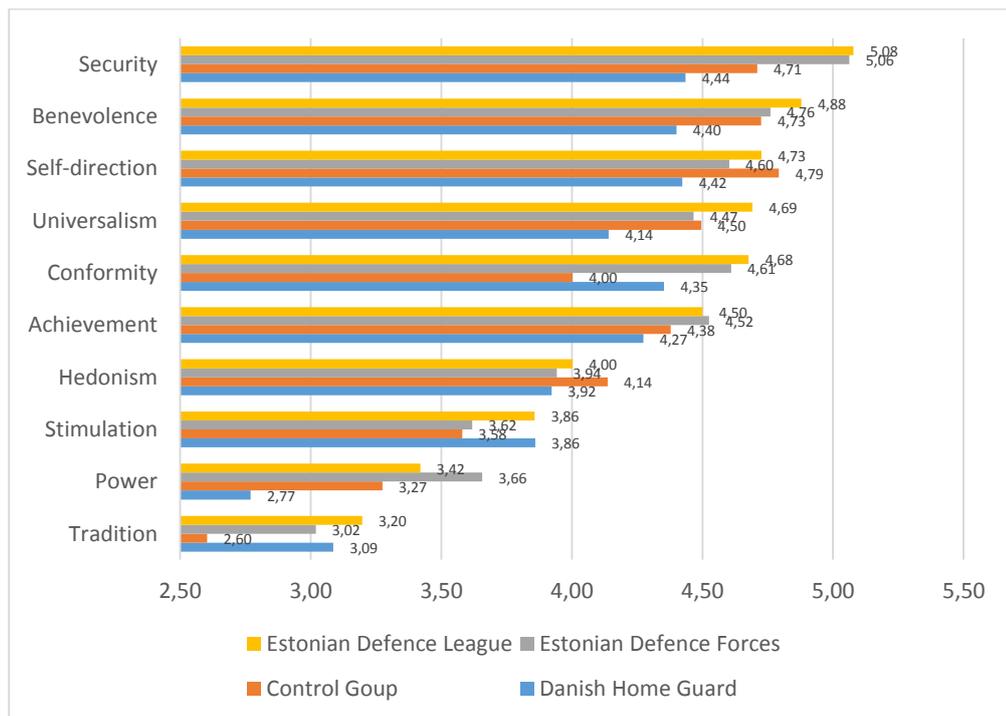
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This analysis provides an overview of the results of a study carried out in military organizations where personal values were measured on a scale of 0-6 (0 – definitely not important; 6 – especially important) and distributed into ten motivational value groups pursuant to the model.

Rankings of individual values and values groups

Figure 1 shows that the leading motivational value group in the Estonian Defence League is **security**, which was assigned an average score of 5.08 points on a scale of 0 to 6. The score for security is high (see Appendix 1) due to **family security** (5.69), followed by **national security** (5.50), **physical and mental health** (5.30) and **sense of belonging** (5.07). Security is in turn followed by the **benevolence** motivational value group (4.88), where the most points were given to **loyalty** (5.31), **sense of responsibility** (5.24) and **honesty** (5.21). Benevolence is followed by **self-direction** (4.73), where the most important is considered to be **freedom of thought and action** (5.10) and **independence** (5.09). The rankings of all 57 values in the Estonian Defence League can be seen in Appendix 1.

FIGURE 1. Rankings of motivational value groups



²Shalom H. Schwarz and Anat Bardi, Value hierarchies across cultures: taking a similarities perspective – Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology, 32, 268, 2001

The leading motivational value group in the Estonian Defence Forces, similarly to the Defence League, is **security**, which was assigned an average score of 5.08 points on the scale of 0 to 6. The score for security is high (see Appendix 2) likewise due to **family security** (5.76), followed, unlike the Defence Leaguers, by **physical and mental health** (5.51) and then **national security** (5.43) and **sense of belonging** (5.05). Security is in turn followed, as it was in the Defence League, by the **benevolence** value group (4.76), where the maximum points were given to **honesty** (5.24), **loyalty** (5.17) and **sense of responsibility** (5.17). Unlike in the Defence League, benevolence is followed by **conformity** (4.61), where **respect for parents and elders** (4.99) and **politeness** (4.98) received the highest scores; the tendency to be subordinate to people one (in Defence Forces members' case, superior officers) is attributed to conformity. **Self-direction** (4.60) is at a relatively equal level with conformity, where **independence** (5.07), and **freedom of thought and action** (4.78) are considered the most important. The ranking of all 57 value items for the Defence Forces is shown in Appendix 2.

The analysis of the results for the Danish Home Guard shows that none of the scores for the motivational value groups exceed 5. Unlike in other organizations, there is a high level of parity between the value groups – six of the 10 broad values scored between 4 and 4.5. Nevertheless, the highest score was received by **security** (4.44), under which the most points were given once again (see Appendix 3) to **family security** (5.30), followed by **national security** (5.23), **physical and mental health** (4.52). Security is followed by **self-direction** (4.42), where the highest scores went to **freedom of thought and action** (4.87), **privacy** (4.77), **independence** and **choosing own goals** (both 4.37). The **benevolence** value group comes next (4.40), where the most points were given to **loyalty** (5.18), **honesty** (5.03) and **sense of responsibility** (4.92). The rankings of all 57 values for the Danish Home Guard can be seen in Appendix 3.

The analysis of the results for the control group – i.e., those who are neither in the home guard nor the military – shows that the scores for none of the value groups exceed five points. The highest average score was for **self-direction** (4.79), within which the most points were given (see Appendix 4) to **freedom of thought and action** (5.49), **independence** (5.10) and **privacy** (4.91). This is followed by **benevolence** (4.73), with **responsibility** (5.16), **true friendship** (5.12) and **loyalty** (4.93) garnering the most points. **Security** as a motivational value type came third (4.71); the value items with the most points were **family security** (5.56), **physical and mental health** (5.43) and **sense of belonging** (4.81). The rankings for all 57 value items for the control group are shown in Appendix 4.

As the analysis results show, the leading motivational value groups for people contributing to the field of defence is **security**, with a similar pattern traceable among both Estonian Defence League and Estonian Defence Forces – security is followed by **benevolence**, which in turn are followed by **self-direction**, **conformity** and **universalism**, each closely separated from the next.

Benevolence (helpfulness, honesty, responsibility, loyalty) is the basis for mutually supportive social relations and cooperation, while universalism is more oriented outside the organization.

The key distinction between the Danish Home Guard and Estonian defence organizations is mainly the fact that none of the value types garnered a higher average score than five, and the Danes also had a relatively equal assessment of the a majority of the motivational value groups – **security** is the leading broad value, but it only edges out self-direction by 0.02 points. The reason may be the stability and amount of peace in Danish society, where people are accustomed to a high level of safety and security in their lives and there is little perceived risk with regard to themselves and the state. As it can be asserted based on previous research that the will to stand up for one's personal values at critical times is growing³, the higher scores given by Estonian respondents to family and national security can be attributed to the current geopolitical situation. The same is true in the control group – Schwartz's 2001 study found that security ranked fourth, but fact that in this study, security came third place among people not involved in defence structures is likely due to the changed environment around us, where greater priority is being placed on aspects related to security.

Tradition received the lowest rating in all groups. This was especially true in the control group where the most points went to the value group diametrically opposed to tradition – **self-direction**. This result is as expected, as according to the Schwartz model, traditional values are indeed the opposite of self-direction. In other words, people who wish to choose their own goals, and put value on creativity and independence, cannot cling to the customs and traditions.

Relatively few points were also given to **power** in all the control groups. Yet power received a higher rating from Defence Forces members, which shows that the members of the Estonian military place importance on social recognition, maintaining a good reputation for themselves, and that they also consider the right to command and give orders more important than Estonian Defence League members, Danish Home Guard members or the control group.

The analysis of individual value items (Appendices 1, 2, 3, and 4) shows clearly that the most important value in all test groups is **family security**, followed by other values – **national security** in the Estonian and Danish home guard organizations, while in the Estonian Defence Forces, **physical and mental health** slightly outstrips national security, and in the control group, **freedom of thought and action** and physical and mental health outstrip national security. The rankings in the Defence Forces, where a high rating was assigned to state of health condition, could be due to the specific nature of the field of work and

³Shalom H. Schwarz, Basic human values: Their content and structure across countries. In A.Tamayo and J.B. Porto (Eds.), Valores e comportamento pp. 21–55. Petropolis, Brazil: Vozes, 2005

the organization's requirements for physical toughness. In the control group, we find that **national security** as a personal value item is only in 18th place.

Thus it can be confidently asserted on the basis of the research that **national security** plays a major role as a personal value among those contributing to defence structures. To determine the potential link between security as a value and the background data of the respondents (gender, seniority, position, education etc.), regression analysis was performed on the data from the Estonian Defence League. The analysis showed that the maximum score given to national security did not depend on background factors⁴.

Comparing the Danish Home Guard to Estonian military organizations, we see distinctions in the ratings given to **mental and physical health** – Danes gave a lower rating (16th place) to health than did the Estonian Defence Forces members (2nd) or the Estonian Defence League (5th place); the Danish rating for **sense of belonging** (29th place) is also significantly lower while Estonians give fairly high ratings to sense of belonging: the Defence Forces rank sense of belonging 10th and Defence Leaguers 12th. This ranking may be due to the current geopolitical situation in Estonia, where a vital need for unity is perceived. The individualistic structure of Danish society may also play a role here, as military personnel are guaranteed equal treatment with other society members, such as the right to belong to a political party or a trade union.

The volunteer organizations (Danish Home Guard and Estonian Defence League) gave a relatively high score to **freedom of thought and action** compared to the Estonian Defence Forces – 7th and 10th place, respectively. This can be attributed to the fact that many volunteers are used to making decisions and risking their own money and property, being organization managers or company owners, where the courage to make decisions and independent action is the basis for being successful in business. Volunteer members have also started giving of their time free of charge and do not require or wish organizations to impose excessive bureaucratic restrictions or commands. At the same time, this can, true enough, prove to be a source of conflict, as military structures are after all regimented organizations that follow the chain of command. We see that **freedom of thought and action** is only ranked 21st in the Defence Forces. This result is to some extent surprising, as initiative, freedom of action and independent thinking are considered the main criteria of success at main-goal-oriented management. Former commander of

⁴ The 786 respondents from the Estonian Defence League were 71% volunteer members of the Defence League and 27% women from the Voluntary Women's Defence Organization (*Naiskodukaitse*). Two percent of the respondents were people under employment contract and active-duty personnel who are not among the volunteer members of the Defence League. Thirty-one percent were in leadership positions and the rest, 69%, were rank and file members. Nearly half of the respondents had one to three minor children; length of service in the organization was one to 10 years in the case of 50% of respondents; 41% had another family member in either Defence Forces or Voluntary Women's Defence Organization; women made up 36% and men 64% of the respondents. Eighty-seven percent of the respondents were active members, 98% were Estonians, 72% were in partnership relations, 47% had a secondary education and 44% had a higher education.

USCENTCOM⁵ James Mattis has repeatedly emphasized that the basis for success is the existence of thinking people – from soldiers to generals – who are able to improvise and seize the initiative and act independently. This is an important aspect for managers to consider in thinking on how to improve the situation.

Danes have a higher regard for their own **capability** (8th place) than do Estonians (13th and 14th place); Danes also consider **privacy** important (9th compared to 24th for Estonian Defence League and 29th for Defence Forces). Danes are also more **helpful** (10th place) than Estonians (19th for Defence League and 23rd for Defence Forces). **Meaning in life** ranked 11th for Estonian Defence Forces and Danish Home Guard; 16th for Estonian volunteers. Danes assign a higher rating to **an exciting life** (13th) while for Estonian Defence Leaguers it was 38th and for Defence Forces members, only 43rd.

All groups assigned high scores to **self-respect**, considering belief in oneself to be important and thereby as well, belief in the organization to which they contribute and with whom they frequently identify.

Devoutness, social power, humility and accepting one's portion in life were seen as the least important by all groups. These values are more characteristic to religious organizations⁶.

Organizational values and mission

The Person-Organization Fit Approach is based on the notion that the contribution of employees for the good of an organization is impacted by the environment in which they work – on how well they fit in with that environment. A high level of commitment and satisfaction with one's work is the ideal person-organization fit outcome⁷, and undoubtedly this is also the case in military structures with their strictly structured organizational culture subjugated to standards and rules, where people must be prepared to defend their country and people. Thus it is important that employees ascribe to values that help the organization carry out its mission.

The mission of the Estonian Defence League is to ensure society's defensive capability, by contributing members' free time and their will to defend their country to keep Estonia free and increase people's sense of security and well-being. The values of the Defence League are trust, openness, mission-awareness, community spirit and sustainability⁷. The mission of the Estonian Defence Forces is to ensure preparedness for defending the country by military means; the organization's values are honesty, loyalty, expertise, bravery, cooperative spirit and openness⁸. The mission of the Danish Hjemmeværnet is

⁵ USCENTCOM – United States Central Command

⁶Tabea Sheel and Gisela Mohr, The third dimension: value-oriented contents in psychological contracts – European Journal of Work and Organisational Psychology, 22:4, 390–407, 2012

⁷<http://www.kaitseliit.ee/en/ed/>

⁸<http://www.mil.ee/et/kaitsevagi/eetika>

to ensure the defence and security of the country's population through the help of flexible and competent volunteers⁹.

A comparison of the values of all three organizations with the members' personal value priorities (Appendices 1, 2, 3, and 4) shows that there is some overlap between them. For example, of the 57 value items, the top seven include, besides **family security** and **national security**, **honesty**, **responsibility**, **loyalty** and **self-respect**. The last three are not seen in the lists of values declared by the Estonian Defence Forces, Estonian Defence League and the Danish Home Guard. The control group ranks **honesty** only 13th.

Personal values are one part of what is termed in the psychological contract. The concept of a psychological contract is expressed in an individual's certainty regarding the terms and conditions of an exchange relationship¹⁰. For example, hours worked are exchanged for fair wages, loyalty for career opportunities, helpfulness and camaraderie for good mutual relations. In recent years, the term "value-based psychological contracts" has appeared in scholarly literature¹¹ which means that people join organizations solely for carrying out a higher calling, and in exchange they demand solely an opportunity to realize those values. The fact that a significant part of psychological contracts comprise value-based expectations and obligations is reaffirmed by a study recently conducted in the Estonian Defence League¹². Thus it is the duty of the Estonian Defence Forces, Defence League and the Danish Home Guard to foster conditions that would allow prioritized values to be carried out – **family security** and **national security**.

At the same time, motivation should be maintained by focusing on other, higher-priority personal value items. For instance, Defence Forces members had a high regard for **physical and mental health**; this suggests the Defence Forces could create a corresponding environment for realizing these values. Even though volunteers rated health-related aspects somewhat lower, establishing opportunities for sports would be an added bonus in this regard as well. A study conducted among the Danish Home Guard in 2011 showed that 86% of volunteers found that the organization could do more to encourage their members to be physically more active.¹³

Both Danes and Estonians rated **honesty** highly, meaning that the organization must be able to remain fair and equitable toward both itself and its workers. Honesty could well be included in the list of the organization's values. A high

⁹<http://www.hjv.dk/sider/english.aspx>

¹⁰ Denise M. Rousseau, Psychological and implied contracts in organizations – Employee Responsibilities and Rights Journal 2:121 – 139, 1989

¹¹ Tabea Sheel and Gisela Mohr, The third dimension: value-oriented contents in psychological contracts – European Journal of Work and Organisational Psychology, 22:4, 390–407, 2012

¹² Silva Kiili, Volunteers' Perceived Obligations in the Estonian Defence League – International Centre for Defence and Security, April 2015 <http://www.icds.ee/publications/article/volunteers-perceived-obligations-in-the-estonian-defence-league/>

¹³ Torben Friedberg and Malene Damgaard, Volunteers in the Danish Home Guard 2011, Copenhagen 2013, SFI – The Danish National Centre for Social Research

rating was also given to **loyalty** and **responsibility**, which could also be expressly mentioned and defined as an official value for the organization.

Conclusion

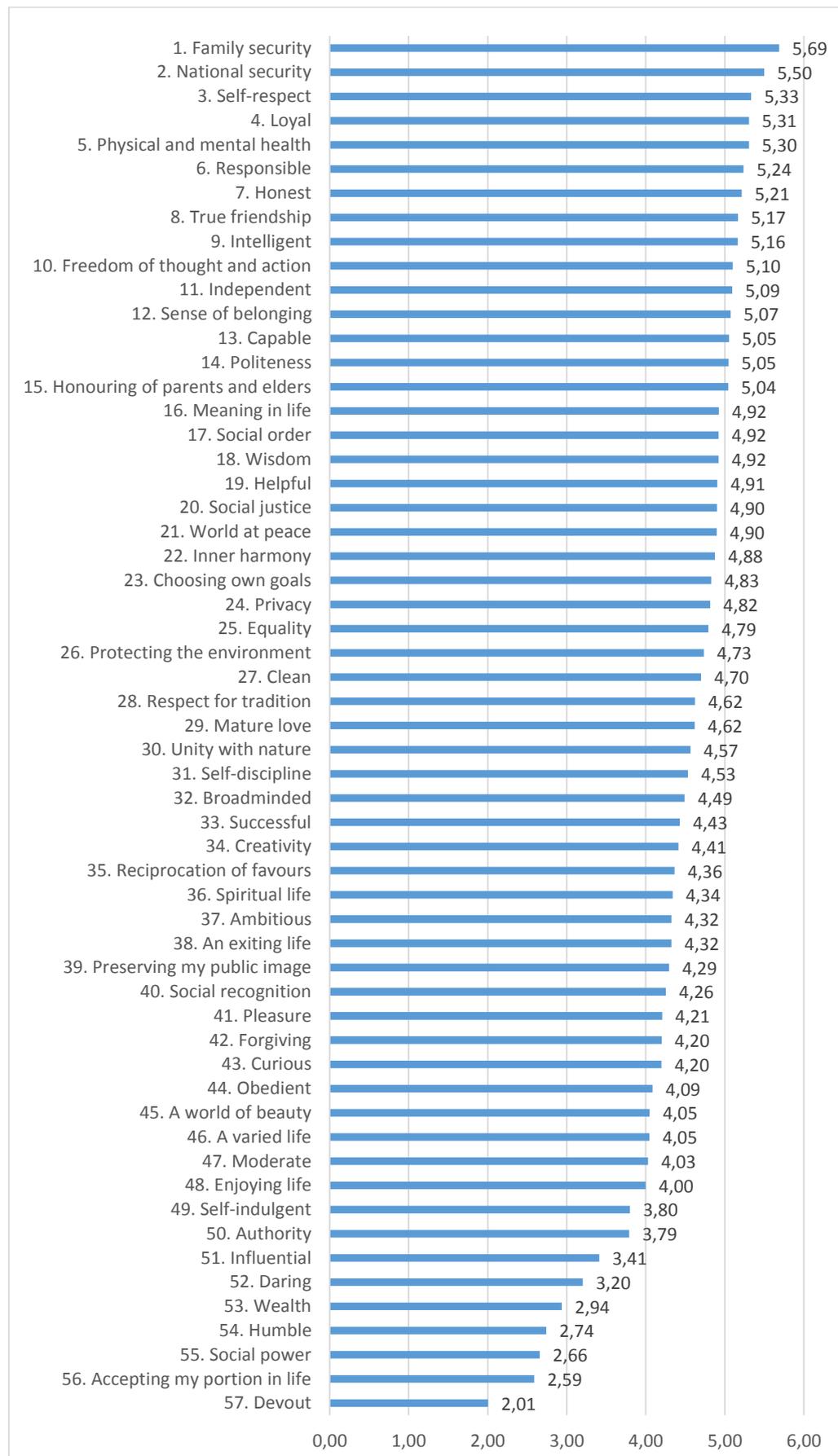
On the basis of the study results, it can be said that the personal values of people who contribute work for the benefit of military organizations align with the respective organization's values and mission, regardless of the contributors' background factors or whether the work is voluntary or remunerated. The leading motivational value group is **security**, under which the highest scores were assigned to value items such as **family security, national security**, and, in the case of Defence Forces members, **mental and physical health** as well. The organization's function is to ensure that its personnel have opportunities to carry out their values. All groups of respondents gave high scores to **self-respect, honesty, and loyalty**, which should be taken into account when implementing a value-based leadership.

It was somewhat to be expected that, compared to Defence Forces members, the volunteer organizations had a higher appraisal of **national security**, as both Estonian Defence League and Danish Home Guard personnel are more closely engaged with society and the community. Members engage with the community not only through national defence but in their everyday activity as well. In the case of the Defence Forces, this is inevitably an organization that due to its very nature is at a greater remove from society and this also shapes their assessments.

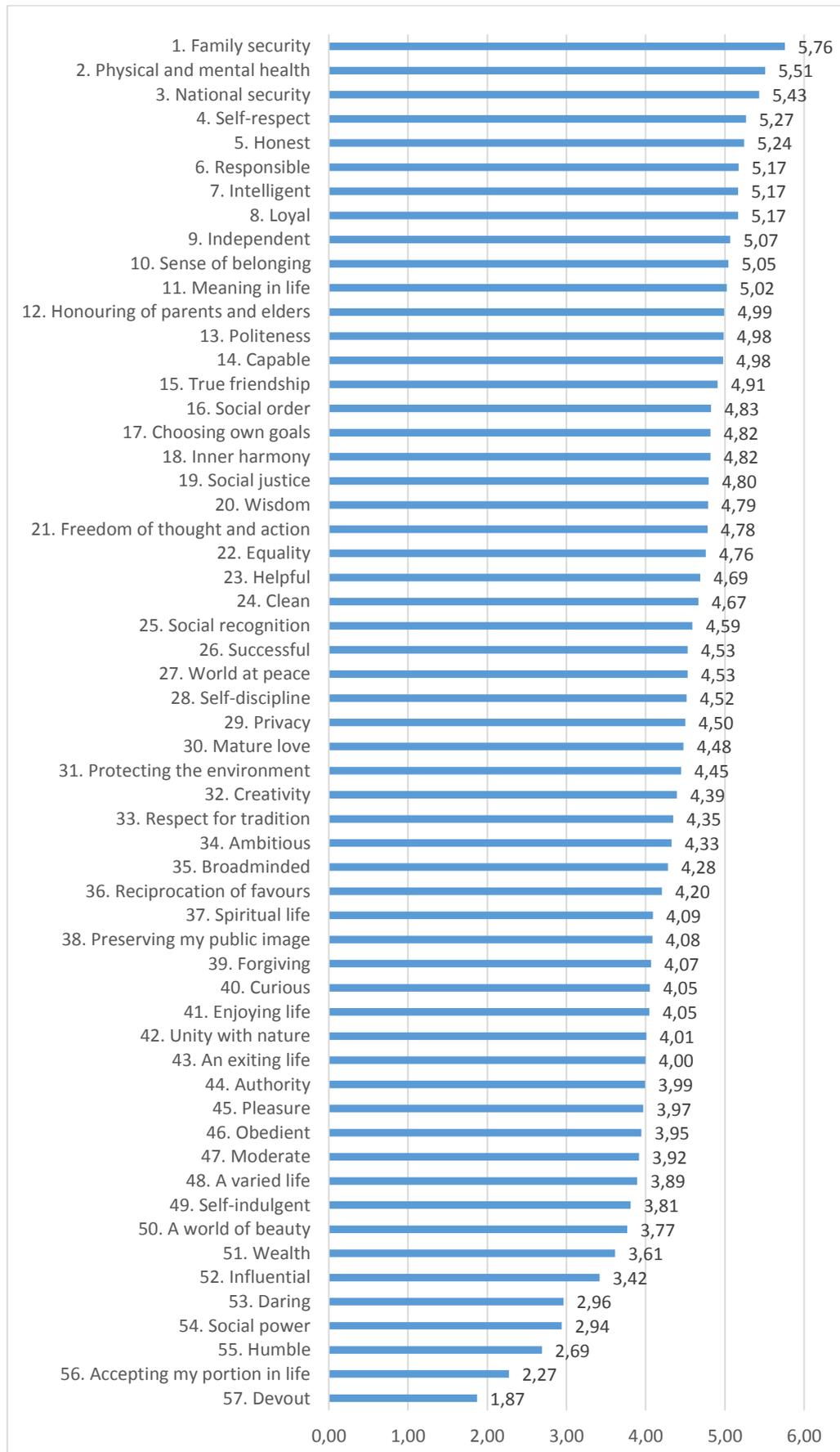
In closing it should be said that volunteers and professional Defence Forces take a different attitude toward national defence – volunteers have the right and opportunity to make their contribution, but for Defence Forces it is their job and their livelihood. This leads to some differences in views, which affect the level of motivation and commitment to the organization.

Nor should it be overlooked that even if a person's direct relationship with an organization is on hold or has been discontinued, that need not mean that the person's values have changed. There can be many reasons that a person is not actively contributing to an organization at a given time, but the need to act upon and implement higher values – thus ensuring the security of those closest to the person and the entire nation – still remains.

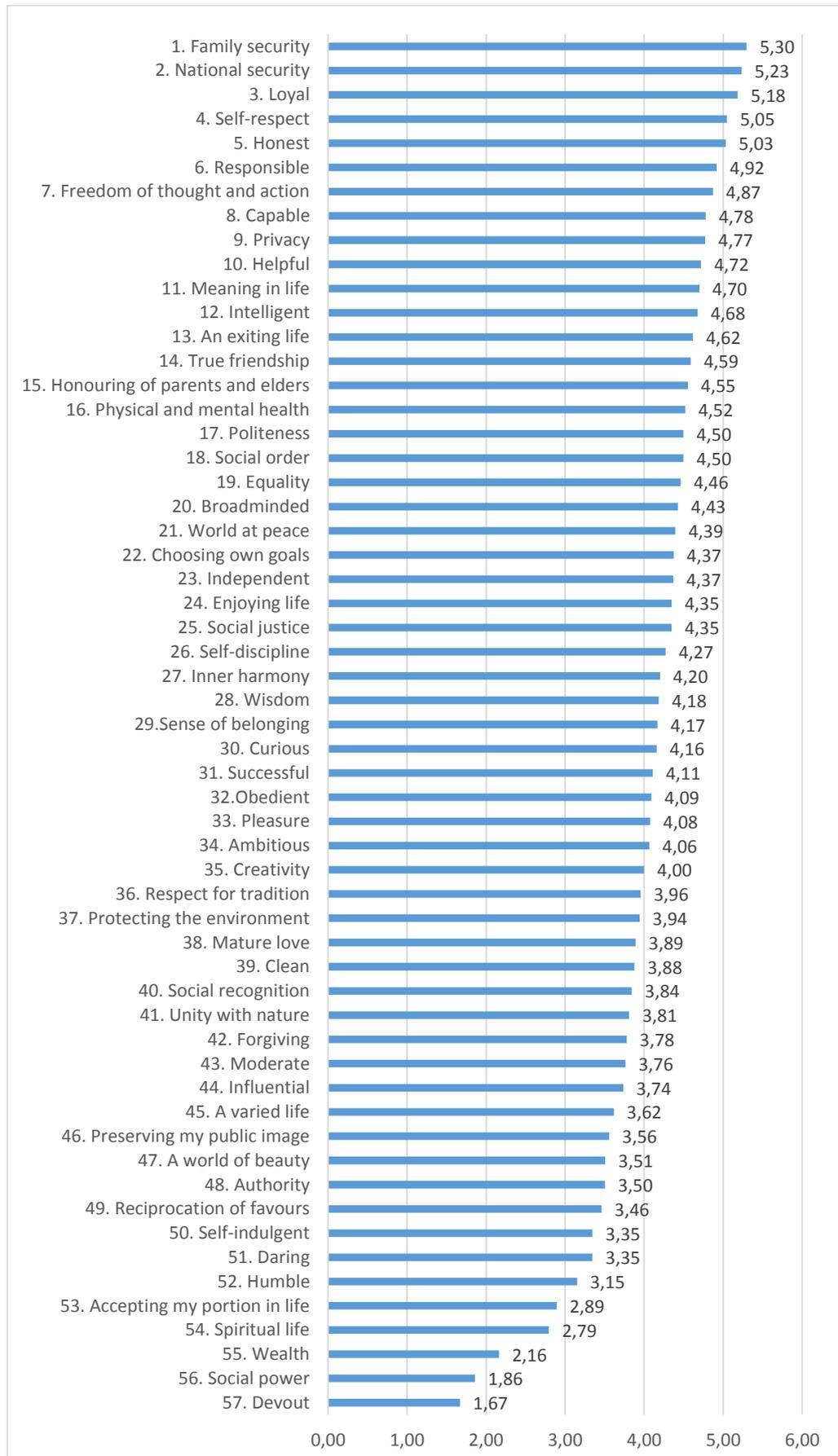
APPENDIX 1. Rankings of individual value items in the Estonian Defence League



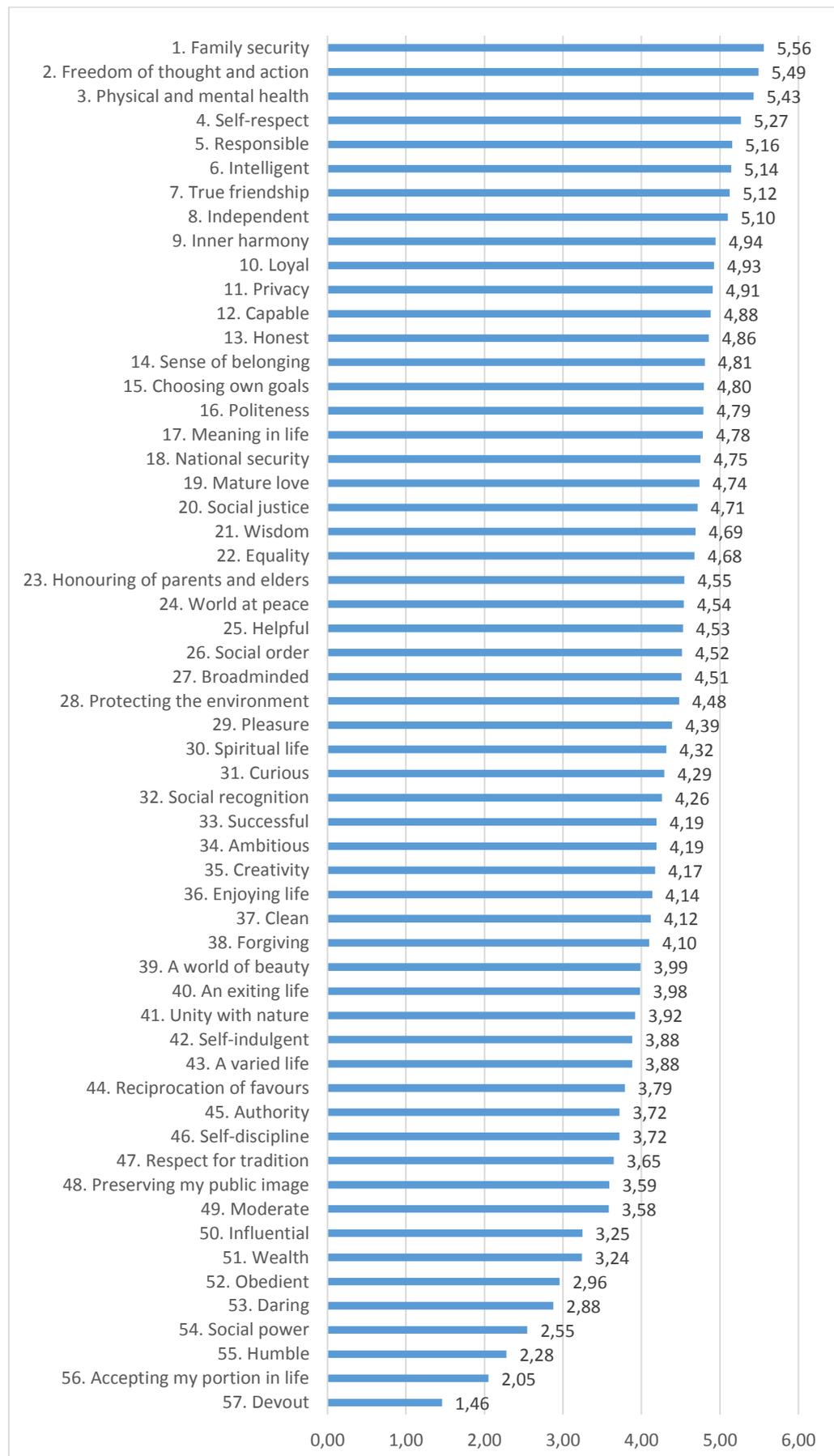
APPENDIX 2. Rankings of individual value items in the Estonian Defence Forces



APPENDIX 3. Rankings of individual value items in the Danish Home Guard



APPENDIX 4. Rankings of 57 individual value items in the Control Group



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